

insurance, He had dwelt on the supreme doctrine that Jesus is the Christ and insisted upon its fundamental position in the articles of faith for the purpose of affording a rational and intelligent basis of confidence. Such is the bearing of all truth upon character, and such is the quality of character when based upon truth.

Akin to this is the fact that sound intelligence is essential to sound faith. This epistle was written to believers, first that they might know that they had eternal life and secondly that they might believe with a firmer, more discriminating and more assured faith "on the name of the Son of God."

Such would be the value of this sound doctrinal teaching and clear intelligence of vital truth, that it would be the privilege of believers to live in the confidence that "if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us." It is clear from this passage as from many others that Christ, the Son, hears and answers prayer.

Sunday School

REVIEW.

December 19, 1909.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."—2 Tim. 4:7.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Acts 21:27-39; 22:22-29. Th.—Acts 27:27-44.
T.—Acts 24:1-22. F.—Acts 28:11-31.
W.—Acts 25:19-32. S.—2 Cor. 11:21-33.
S.—2 Tim. 4:1-18.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.

SAUL OF TARSUS—PAUL THE APOSTLE. REVIEW.

The eleven lessons passed over during the quarter now nearing its close have invited us to a careful study of the acts and letters of Paul, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

The period from his conversion (A. D. 37) to his death (A. D. 67), 30 years, (the record of which we have in his letters and the book of Acts), holds for us all that we really know of his life. The previous portion, probably about 32 years, furnished an open field for the imagination of early writers and for gatherers of tradition and for semi-reliable profane writers to exercise their gifts. For reasons of His own God has not been pleased to greatly indulge our appetite for the incidents of minute personal biography and but little profit has ever been realized from the attempts of men to supply what God has been pleased to omit. The life that is deemed worthy of a place in God's record usually begins with the time of one's full and final decision to take service under the Captain of our salvation.

An unwarranted attempt was made by Peter and the other Apostles to fill the vacancy created in the Apostolate by the suicide of Judas Iscariot. They found a scripture which they supposed authorized them to proceed to fill the vacancy and so the name of Matthias was written in place of Judas Iscariot. But Prophets and Apostles are not made of man nor by man. Jesus, with his own words, without the mediative agency of any other, without voting or lottery, called and ordained His Apostles. He, with his own voice called the man, Saul of Tarsus, to fill the vacancy, created by the death of Judas Iscariot. Matthias did not fill it, nor is he ever heard of as an Apostle, after his election by the eleven. Paul himself in defending his Apostolic authority and privileges stoutly affirms: "For I make known unto you brethren as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." "But when it was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles . . . I conferred not with flesh and blood neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were Apostles before me."

"They I say who were of repute imparted nothing to me." (Read the letter to the Galatians). "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles."

The eleven lessons that we have studied give us the leading events in the life of this Apostle, born to the Apostolic office out of the usual time—later than the natal day of the other Apostles. They also give us the prominent points in his character.

Leaving the student to recall or re-read these incidents, it shall be the effort of this discussion to mention some of the prominent features in the life of Paul, to try to ascertain the source whence they came and measure, if we can, the durability and worth of such a character.

So many of the graces of Christ met in the Apostle Paul and appeared to make in him such an effort to produce a "full orb'd manhood" that one can not readily select one or another trait of character as predominant. His abilities as an orator, as a thinker, as a logician, his acquirements as a linguist, the strategic place to which he was born, touching as he did the Jewish and Greek and Roman world—all these have received ample treatment at the hands of many analytic writers. Attention has also been called to the great service rendered by him in the growth or maturity of Christian doctrine in his preaching and letters. Space does not permit mention of all. There are two homely graces that, it seems to me, shine more strongly in his character than all others and that cast their brightness over and through all the other powers of his life.

1. He was sincere. The sincere is that which examined by the light of the sun, lighting upon it and passing through it, is found to be pure. The sunlight finds no element to oppose its passage through. "Behold, before God I lie not" (Gal. 1:20). "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 9:1). There are various degrees of sincerity. The human heart is a nesting place for deceit and lying. It can be cleansed only by the blood of Christ. God promoted Paul to a great deliverance from all duplicity. It is difficult to overestimate the power of such a life.

2. He was consistent. This means that his life kept even pace with his talk and his writing. If he wrote "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," he was himself enduring hardness. If he said, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," he presented his own body—he "poured himself out" as an offering.

These two elements of character are bases of power. They go together and render any life, however stunted in mental or bodily endowments, great and enduring.

How came it that Paul attained so greatly in these graces of sincerity and consistency? There have been many just as brilliant men, just as eloquent, just as learned, just as great in natural gifts. The world has seen few if any that equalled him in simple sincerity of inner character and consistency of conduct. Why? Because and only because Paul surrendered himself to the Lord Jesus, retaining no part of himself for himself. Occasionally the Holy Spirit secures such complete accordancy in a life as to show what He can do with a man—any man, if surrendered to God. Paul was a "prisoner of the Lord Jesus."

What of the investment of one's all, thus placing it in the hands of the Lord Jesus? Will it pay? Such a life is imperishable. There is little to be burned up as rubbish. Will it pay? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, goodness, self-control, faith." "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day."

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SINCERITY.

Few things shake our confidence in a person more than to find out that he is insincere. We do not know how to take him and we do not know how to speak to him. We can not trust him, and we must stand on guard all the time we are dealing with him. He is an unpleasant man to have any dealings with and we avoid him as much as possible.